

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

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## **The Lure of the City Rochester in the 1890's**

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Rochester in the 1890's was an exciting place to visit, and some who came as sightseers later decided to make it their home. With its population growing from 133,000 to 162,000 during the decade, the city attracted enough visitors and other travelers to crowd the waiting rooms of the five central stations that served its principal railroads; they also taxed the facilities of six first- and second-class hotels and supported a score of lesser hosteleries as well. Not all the visitors needed hotel accommodations, however, for many arrived on excursions by train or boat and returned by the same means at the close of day. Others stopped at the homes of relatives or friends, for Rochesterians were hospitable and made deliberate efforts to welcome visitors and newcomers to the city.

Many residents rejoiced when the Census of 1890 showed a 50 per cent growth during the preceding decade. That increase of 44,500 represented a population gain through local births, plus several thousand newcomers from abroad and several thousand more from nearby towns and farms. The influx confirmed the fine opinion most residents held of Rochester, widely

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known as the Flower City, and also contributed in many ways to its vitality.

### **An Exciting Place to Visit**

Few visitors displayed greater excitement than the 2000 who arrived with the annual Pea-pickers Excursion each fall.<sup>1</sup> Assembled from village stops up the valley by the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh, the first trainload reached the station on West Main Street by 9:45 A.M. Eager to explore the big city, many hastened to board one of the waiting trolleys for perhaps their first ride on the electric cars (introduced at Rochester in 1890). Most of the passengers alighted at the central Four Corners, some to transfer to a Lake Avenue car to go down to the beach at Charlotte, others to shop in one of Rochester's big department stores on State Street, or across the river at the St. Paul Street corner where the Sibley, Lindsay, & Curr store, occupying the lower floors of the new 12-story Granite Building, completed in 1893, boasted the largest floor space of any store in western New York. Some boarded the Mt. Hope cars for a visit to Mt. Hope Cemetery, still a favorite for many picknickers; others took the Plymouth Avenue cars to South Park where they could rent a canoe or rowboat for a ride on the river or listen to a band concert near the picnic grove.

A second trainload of Pea-pickers arrived at 11:00; they were not all Pea-pickers, of course, but that was the popular designation for these excursions, which brought town and country folk into the city for a busy day of sightseeing. Enterprising promoters were on hand ready to take some to the Washington Rink where in 1893 a walking match was in progress between four rival Amazons, or to the Driving Park where a series of horse races was scheduled for the afternoon. Again many of the visitors took the trolleys to the Four Corners where some entered the Powers Block, Rochester's most magnificent building,

crowned with three Mansard roofs, and rode the elevator to the fifth floor where for a quarter they could visit the Powers Art Gallery, western New York's largest collection of original paintings and copies of old masters.

After viewing the art collection, most excursionists visited the hall of mirrors where the distorted images they saw as they stood before the mirrors of varied curvatures brought exclamations of surprise and gales of laughter. A few climbed the broad staircase to the base of the tower and mounted the circular stairs to the successive observation levels. From the top they enjoyed, on a clear day, an unmatched view of the city. The river flowing north through the center of town could be followed for a few blocks north of Main Street to the brink of the main falls where the railroad bridge crossed. The river disappeared into the gorge at this point, prompting some visitors to hasten down to view the falls from the new Platt Street bridge built across the gorge in 1890. Others were more interested in tracing the course of the Erie Canal from the south-eastern to the north-western part of the city. Main Street, running east and west, divided the east and west halves of Rochester into quarters, all of which could clearly be seen, as though it were a large model, from the lofty top of the Powers Block tower.

A stroll along the downtown streets supplied novelty and excitement enough for many of the city's rural visitors in the depressed mid-nineties. Indeed, with a multitude of shops and stores beckoning, it required great resistance to be content with window shopping. Rochester, long noted for its women's shoes and its men's clothing, for its spectacles and thermometers, as well as for its flowers, was now becoming famous for its photographic equipment; visitors who wished to acquire a souvenir of their trip to the Flower City were tempted to drop into a store selling the recently-invented Kodaks. Eastman's Number 1 camera, which sold for \$25, was so simple that all an amateur

had to do, when he saw something he wished to photograph, was to press the button; when he had finished snapping 100 pictures he could send the camera back to the factory in Rochester where the photographs would be developed and the camera recharged for a modest \$10.00.

There were, of course, several favorite views to be photographed right in the heart of Rochester. One was from the center of the Exchange Street bridge over the Erie Canal where visitors could photograph a team of mules pulling a canal barge through the aqueduct above the rushing Genesee. Of course the river was not often a rushing torrent, except during the annual spring floods or after a heavy rain. But it was an interesting sight, nevertheless, especially when viewed from the railing along the north side of the aqueduct where one could see the river disappearing under the arches of Main Street Bridge, which carried a row of four-story buildings across the Genesee without a break. That unique bridge, reminiscent of old London Bridge, was a popular object for photographers. So was the lofty statue of Mercury; perched atop the square smokestack of the Kimball tobacco factory overlooking the river and the aqueduct, it was Rochester's favorite sky-line symbol.

Excursionists who arrived on the early train had time before departing to dine at one of Rochester's many restaurants and eating houses, such as the famed Oyster Ocean in the basement of the Wilder Building at the Four Corners, or Peter Gruber's saloon on nearby Mill Street. Rattlesnake Pete, as he was popularly called, had arrived early in 1893 from Olean, and his saloon museum quickly became a favorite Rochester attraction; many lusty male patrons found his collection of live rattlers and other reptiles worthy of repeated visits. Excursionists who had come on the late train could dine in greater leisure at the Powers Hotel and perhaps make a visit after nightfall to the famed Warner Observatory on East Avenue, where "Professor"

Swift, a former hardware merchant from Clarkson, took delight in showing the wonders of the distant heavens to curious visitors. As the only observatory in America open to the public (all a citizen needed was a free pass which he could secure at the Warner Safe Liver Cure office on St. Paul Street), it was a strong competitor of the star lecture series of the Rochester Academy of Science for the attention of visiting school teachers and other intellectuals.<sup>3</sup>

The Pea-pickers' schedule did not permit a visit to any of Rochester's four principal theatres in the mid-nineties. But as their number increased in the late nineties with the opening of several variety houses and the Wonderland, Rochester's first cinema, the city's standing as a theatrical center was enhanced. In the early months of 1898 both the Lehigh Valley and the Erie Railroad scheduled occasional theatre specials bringing townsmen into Rochester for an evening at one of its play houses.<sup>4</sup>

The fall and wintertime excursions were more than matched in popularity by summertime excursions bringing trainloads from up the valley directly to Ontario Beach. At Charlotte, Rochester's lakeside suburb, visitors could marvel at Ontario's ocean-vastness and perhaps join the venturesome few who donned a body-covering bathing suit to enjoy a refreshing dip in the cool water. Most, however, were content to stroll along the boardwalk and watch the many curious spectacles staged for them daily. There in 1893 was "Professor" Brown the balloonist ready to drop his assistant, "Professor" Allen, by parachute into the lake, and Calverly, the famous rope walker who periodically carried a young assistant on his back along a wire stretched across the mouth of the river. On a later visit the excursionist could watch a pair of elephants bathing in the lake, or if sufficiently daring he could purchase a ride on the new shoot-the-chute opened in July 1896, which ended with a splash into the lake.

July was the favorite month for excursions, and the Fourth regularly brought a visit by one or more boatloads from Canada across the lake. Indeed the fireworks displays and other activities on that day frequently attracted throngs of 30,000 or more to Charlotte and nearby Sea Breeze and brought other thousands to the Rochester parks where brass bands and ball clubs supplied a choice of daytime amusement while picnickers awaited the city's fireworks display over the river at nightfall.

Nightfall revealed other Rochester attractions for rural visitors. Gas lights in the streets were familiar to most adults, for several villages up the valley now boasted such improvements, but few cities had so completely replaced them with electric lamps as Rochester had in 1890. Indeed the illumination, especially on Main Street, made the Saturday evening promenade from the Liberty Pole west to the new Court House and back a weekly experience for thousands of residents as well as visitors.

In a rhapsodic account of "Rochester Ways," Charles Mulford Robinson, one of the city's adopted sons, described that scene in 1900 with fervor: "In the music of the Main Street crowd is written the story of Rochester's life. . . The street is our Broadway—and more. It is our Piccadilly, Strand, and Regent street thrown into one. Except in name, it is our Boulevard, and Main Street strollers are Rochester's "boulevardiers." Saturday nights you should see them choke the street—all of our villagers, and they are thousands, shopping or promenading."

Perhaps the occasions that brought residents and visitors into closest association were the annual fairs of the Western New York Agricultural Society. These events, held generally at Driving Park in September, featured races and other contests as well as exhibits of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and livestock among other products of area farms. Intermingled were the displays of farm implements manufactured at Rochester and of domestic furnishings such as stoves, carpets, and a full assortment of

household furniture, also the products of local firms. Visitors from out of town overflowed the city's hotels during the fair week, and the committee on arrangements annually compiled a list of homes willing to accept roomers.<sup>6</sup>

The successive days of the fair afforded ideal opportunities for restless sons and daughters of exhibiting farmers to meet the owners or managers of urban factories and inquire about jobs in the city. William C. Barry, who frequently served as judge of the horticulture exhibits, was always on the lookout for young men to tend his nurseries; James Vick the seedman was equally interested in engaging young women to package his seeds and could use any who had some talent with paints to color his illustrated catalogues; Joseph T. Cunningham the carriage manufacturer could generally take on extra workmen at his large factory on Canal Street; and William Kimball had a steady demand for young men and women in his cigarette factory.

### **Newcomers Find Jobs and Homes**

In the dark years of the depression in the mid-nineties only George Eastman and a few other enterprising manufacturers ventured to hire additional workers, yet skilled newcomers could, nevertheless, generally find jobs even in the hard times. After the return of prosperity in the late nineties, the demand for craftsmen and even for common laborers picked up, prompting a renewed influx from nearby farms and villages as well as from more distant places in America and abroad.<sup>7</sup>

The census reports tell us much concerning the origin of Rochester's population. Of the city's 133,000 residents in 1890, 86,000 were born in New York State (most of them in Rochester itself), 8000 in a dozen other states, and 39,000 abroad. By 1900 these categories had increased to 112, 9, and 40 thousand respectively. Although the immigrants comprised less than 30

per cent of the totals, well over half the native-born children under ten were offspring of foreign-born parents, which increased the numbers in immigrant families by some 15,000 and reduced those recognized as native by a similar figure, thus bringing the total considered foreign to 40 per cent or more.<sup>8</sup> Of course most children of foreign parents were sufficiently Americanized by the time they had reached their teens to mix with other natives of longer standing.

Unfortunately the census does not tell us how many of those born in New York State were natives of Rochester, and how many were migrants from neighboring towns and rural areas. It does, however, provide some suggestive clues. Thus of the ten counties sometimes considered in the Rochester region, only three, aside from Monroe, showed any growth in the 1890's, and their increase of 1200 each, was, as in the case of Monroe's 28,000, more than absorbed by their largest towns—Batavia, Corning, Geneva, and Rochester. Since the rural areas of the ten counties enjoyed a high birth rate, they must have exported more than their surplus of births to the cities, and Rochester certainly received its share, though the precise number is hard to determine.

Part of the statistical uncertainty lies in the apportionment of deaths among the several divisions of the population. The Census of 1900 shows 30,000 children under ten resident in Rochester, fully enough to account for its increase of 29,000 during the decade, if the local deaths can otherwise be offset. The census added less than 1000 to the foreign-born total, but since this aging group had a high death rate, many immigrant replacements were required to achieve that modest increase.<sup>9</sup> In its record of vital statistics for 1900, the census of that year reported 2446 deaths in Rochester, 884 of whom were foreign born. If, as a rough calculation, these are multiplied by ten to determine the number of deaths to be replaced during the de-



cade, the city must have attracted at least 10,000 immigrants from abroad, plus a net gain of 14,000 native in-migrants, to offset its natural losses. From the same source and by a similar calculation we discover that Rochester's ten-county hinterland produced a surplus for the decade of 15,000 births over deaths. Since the area's population, excluding Rochester, declined 1500 during the nineties, the Flower City must have bid fairly strongly against neighboring Buffalo, Syracuse, and more distant metropolises for the region's migrants.<sup>10</sup>

Such statistical aggregates are meaningless until we translate them into human experience. Among the newcomers of the 1890's were Henry D. Silver, his wife Lizzie, and Earl their first son. Henry, born on a farm in Sodus in nearby Wayne County, had first come to Rochester as a carpenter in the mid-eighties. Here he met and married Lizzie J. Squire, sister of a fellow carpenter from Savannah, Georgia. They acquired a house on Gates Avenue just beyond the city limits in 1889 and lived there until the panic of 1893 halted building activities and forced the young carpenter to take his family back to board with his parents in rural Cato. Henry however returned to Rochester a year later and formed a partnership with a struggling grocer, peddling his wares to rural families in Gates. The Silvers, who reoccupied their old house, now annexed by the city, soon had a second child, and three more arrived in the next decade. Henry built a larger house for the family and several more for sale on a street that was appropriately named Silver Street; he acquired two grocery stores and other properties as the years advanced. But his most remarkable accomplishment was the writing of a private journal in which he recorded his daily experiences together with many domestic details and pungent reflections that give life and fullness to the history of the period.<sup>11</sup>

Few if any of Rochester's other newcomers of the nineties left such a complete account as Silver's diary. Indeed, the great

majority left no records at all, though occasional details can be gleaned from the obituaries of those who finally made their mark on the community. One of the most notable was Frank W. Lovejoy who later became president of the Eastman Kodak Company. Born in Concord, N. H., and educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he worked for two years first in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and then in Cambridge, Massachusetts, before accepting an offer in 1897 to join the supervisory staff at Kodak Park in Rochester.<sup>19</sup> Few newcomers in the nineties arrived under happier circumstances, and fewer still rivaled Lovejoy's success. Yet a check of the presidents and treasurers of the 300 stock companies listed in the Rochester Directory for 1910 reveals that at least sixty-five, who arrived in the nineties, had already attained that enviable status.

Newcomers equipped with a good education in law or medicine, in religion or the academic fields, had of course special advantages. Worthy examples were Walter S. Hubbell from Cincinnati who later became Eastman's attorney; Dr. George Goler from Brooklyn, Rochester's famous health officer; the Rev. Clarence A. Barbour from Hartford, among numerous other in-migrant clergymen; and Superintendent of Schools Herbert S. Weet from nearby Orleans County, one of several out-of-town students at the University of Rochester in the 1890's who later became distinguished citizens. Newcomers with other special skills had advantages, too, for Rochester in the 1890's was emerging as a city of technical industries and high-grade consumer products. Talented craftsmen, such as Alfred Green a master mechanic who arrived in 1892, easily found jobs in local plants, and some, like Green who later founded the Green & Ward Electrical Company, ultimately established their own firms.

Fortune did not always smile, even on those with talent, as the career of Harvey Ellis revealed. A Rochester-born architect

who with his brother had designed and erected several large buildings on St. Paul Street in the early 1880's, introducing a style that greatly influenced the work of other architects in Rochester and elsewhere in the 1890's, Harvey left for the west in the mid-eighties. After an erratic career in Minneapolis, St. Louis, and elsewhere, he returned to Rochester in 1895 to rejoin his brother's firm. Here in the late nineties he supplied the architectural designs for a number of factories and other structures including the large Woodworth Building on State Street. He conducted a class for young artists and painted some notable water colors, but personal and family problems drove him to drink and he died in poverty at Syracuse in 1903.<sup>13</sup>

Whether Ellis should be included among the newcomers of the 1890's is uncertain, but as a native returning for the second time he illustrates the migratory character of the city's population. Again the Directories are revealing, for a check of those listed in the 1889 Directory shows that only 62.6 per cent of a sampling of 500 names reappeared in the 1894 Directory, in spite of the fact that the total number listed had increased by 10,000 or 20 per cent. The increase was barely half as large in the next five-year period, but the percentage of those listed in 1894 who reappeared in 1899 dropped only slightly, to 58.4. The depression's chief effect, if these sources can be trusted, was to check the influx of newcomers rather than to speed the departure of residents. Thus new names added to the Directory lists declined from 13,841 in 1891 to 10,177 in 1898, while the names dropped also declined, though less precipitously, from 11,600 to 8775 in these dark years.

The successive housing censuses supply additional data on conditions in the city. Rochesterians had achieved a fairly high proportion of home ownership in the prosperous eighties, leading all the large cities, with 44 out of every 100 houses owner-occupied. That proportion declined during the nineties when

the depression forced many to halt payments on their mortgages and as a result to lose their homes. Four more-fortunate cities pulled ahead of Rochester during the decade, but it still held a high rating for home ownership at the turn of the century. As in other growing cities, however, the long pause in home building had created a severe shortage of houses, and 8000 of the city's 34,000 families of 1900 were sharing quarters with their relatives or friends.<sup>14</sup>

In some instances this was a most agreeable arrangement, as for example when the aging Sherlock Andrews invited young George M. Haushalter, whom he had met on a trip to Paris, to share his spacious home on St. Paul Street. Haushalter, a bohemian art student, was courting a Rochester girl, not too successfully as events proved, but the association of the young bachelor and the aging widower proved most delightful and made the homestead, surrounded by towering factories, an oasis for their gentlemen friends around the turn of the century before the social clubs had acquired a firm hold.<sup>15</sup>

Of course in most cases the doubling up was sheer hardship, and this was particularly true for most newcomers from abroad, many of whom had to share quarters that were inadequate even for one family. Yet several of Rochester's immigrant groups had developed a cohesiveness that prompted them to share each other's burdens. Thus two of the city's largest ethnic colonies, the Germans and the Jews, each maintained agents who regularly met the immigrant trains when they pulled into the New York Central Station on St. Paul Street often four or five times a week during the nineties. These agents greeted their ethnic fellows to Rochester, helped them to locate friends and jobs, and generally safeguarded their interests. An Italian clerk at the station performed a similar service for his countrymen, as did a Polish priest for a time; and the Women's Christian Association, formed in 1896, maintained a representative at the station to

meet incoming trains and assist young women of any nationality who came to the city seeking jobs or homes.<sup>16</sup>

Rochester's foreign-born total in 1890 was 39,775. Most of them hailed from 23 European countries or from Canada, which contributed 5818, a delegation surpassed only by that from Germany, 17,330 in size, and by the Irish who numbered 6484. Fourth in rank were the British with 5788. Russia, Poland, and Italy came next and in sufficient numbers to maintain distinctive colonies—in the case of the Russians and Poles, as well as the Germans, the colonies were further subdivided on religious grounds into Christians and Jews. With their native-born children, who numbered 22,942 in 1890, these families crowded the first, second, fifth, seventh, eighth, and seventeenth wards and spilled over into a dozen others. Except for the first and second wards in the heart of the old city, west of the river, most of these settlements were in the northeastern section beyond the railroad tracks.<sup>17</sup>

Living "beyond the tracks" had a special historical significance in Rochester not generally appreciated. When the Auburn Railroad was laid out in the late 1830's, its route skirted the northeastern section of the small city of that date and crossed the river just above the main falls to reach the station then on Mill Street. There it connected with the Tonawanda Railroad, which extended westward towards Buffalo. The steam trains crossed St. Paul Street and State Street at grade. Most of the city lay to the south, but families that had settled along the northern stretches of St. Paul and State Streets learned to listen for the engine's bell before crossing the tracks; fortunately the trains were either stopping or starting as they passed these established highways. Very few streets were opened across the tracks east or west of these principal highways until after the New York Central (which in 1854 had consolidated these and other short lines between New York and Buffalo) decided in the early

1880's to elevate its tracks. Streets were extended through underpasses into the northeastern and northwestern parts of the city in the eighties. Most newcomers of the 1880's and the 1890's, many of them from abroad, built their homes in these newly opened areas, and when the electric trolleys arrived in 1890, they too dipped under the tracks and speeded the development of these neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup>

Although their net increase was small during the nineties, more than 10,000 newcomers arrived from abroad, most of them to offset those who died in Rochester during the decade or to replace others who returned home or moved elsewhere. In the process the character of Rochester's foreign-born population changed considerably. The German-born dropped almost 2000 in number, and the Irish and the British practically a thousand each, but some of their countrymen who had settled first in Canada helped to swell its Rochester delegation by almost 2000. The Italians and the Poles doubled in number, and the Russians increased 50 per cent. The Greeks quadrupled, but their total in 1900 was only 18, and their migration like that of the Italians did not reach full flood until after the turn of the century.<sup>19</sup>

Newcomers from small countries and others who lacked a strong local group to identify with generally found lodgement in the lofts over the business blocks in the old first and second wards. A special enumeration of the inhabitants of the first ward in 1905 revealed the presence there of eight separate nationalities. Some had only a dozen or so representatives, as in the case of the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Arabs, but others such as the Bulgarians seemed to be more numerous, although the absence of an interpreter made their true identity and number hard to determine. Generally one or two of every group could speak English and provided a link to the larger community, though often the newcomers of varied tongues learned to understand and work with each other in ways that baffled the supposedly

more literate Rochesterians. Indeed, Rochester's foreign-born were so fully assimilated by 1900 that the census found only 617 males over 21 who could not speak English; of course the total classed as illiterate, including women and children over 10, was much larger and numbered 3780 that year.<sup>20</sup>

After finding shelter, sometimes with the aid of relatives or friends, the first task of most newcomers was to locate a job. Those with special skills had little difficulty for Rochester, as an industrial city, offered a great variety of opportunities. An industrial census in 1894 listed 309 separate occupations. Of the 50,787 employed, even during the depression, 39,236 were men and 11,551 women. Clerks, numbering 3611, comprised the largest group that year, but tailors and shoemakers who followed closely would jump ahead in the late nineties as the city's leading industries revived. By 1899 the Chamber of Commerce could boast that "Rochester has the largest preserving establishment in the world, the largest button factory, the largest lubricating oil plant, is the first city in the production of photographic apparatus and optical instruments and in the output of seeds and nursery stock." The city's 37 clothing factories and 64 shoe firms supplied the largest number of jobs and produced the greatest value.<sup>21</sup>

Yet in spite of the many opportunities, it was not always easy to find and hold a job. Many crafts required apprenticeship training, and some were only open to the sons of master craftsmen. When, for example, a contractor engaged three newcomers to do some stone work at \$2.75 a day in 1894, the five regular stone masons on the job struck in protest against the employment of men who were not recognized stone masons and whose wages undermined the standard of \$3.50 a day. The strikers, backed by their union, forced the contractor to discharge the new men, but because of the hard times they had to accept a reduction in time to eight hours and in pay to \$2.90 a

day.”

The highly skilled stone masons, backed by a strong union, were more fortunate than most workers. Both the journeymen and master barbers protested when several newcomers to Rochester cut their prices 50 per cent to 10c a shave and 15c a haircut; to protect themselves and assure a free day on Sunday they formed a Journeymen Barbers Union and a Barbers' Protective Association in 1895 to stabilize the trade. They secured passage of a Sunday closing ordinance, but it was hard to enforce.<sup>23</sup> Their difficulties were not as great, however, as those of the 100 or more button-hole machine operators who won a strike that July for the restoration of a 20 per cent wage cut, only to find that the firm which performed this work on contract for most of the city's clothing producers would not take back the union president. The men, who now received 25c for every 100 standard button holes and 37½¢ for 100 double button holes, with a guarantee of \$8.00 a week to all men with three years experience, increased their union fees to raise enough to employ their president as a business agent.<sup>24</sup>

That was a simpler problem than the clothing workers faced. Rochester's largest industry, divided between factory and sweat-shop production, was torn by several rival unions. The cutters, one of the highest paid crafts in the industry, had formed a strong union under the Knights of Labor banner and, by the threat of a boycott, had secured in 1890 a 9-hour day with increased pay. When the union levied a fine of \$1500 against one manufacturer for an alleged breach of the agreement, he refused to pay and persuaded the Clothing Manufacturers Exchange to institute a lockout against the 250 union cutters. Since the shut-down affected some 5000 other workers, a state mediator hastened to Rochester and soon negotiated a settlement. Its terms, however, left the union leader languishing in jail on a charge of extortion and the Rochester firms suffering from the nation-



wide boycott he had helped to organize.

A Federal investigation of the sweatshop conditions in Rochester brought charges and denials that many workers labored in crowded and unsanitary lofts for subcontractors who gave them only a few pennies for each garment sewed. The investigation had the effect of speeding the concentration of production into standardized factories where boys and girls of 14 years started at \$2.00 a week and some experienced women earned as much as \$9.50 and some men as much as \$15.00 a week. Many urged the need for a union to improve their lot, but the appearance in the late nineties of the United Garment Workers, an American Federation of Labor affiliate, only complicated the situation for both management and labor in this industry.<sup>25</sup>

The Bakers Union had troubles of a different sort. When the U. S. Baking Company invaded Rochester in 1894 with bread priced at 4¢ a loaf, some local firms cut their prices from 6¢ to 3½¢ only to see the trust prices go down, first to 2½¢ and finally to 1¢ a loaf. Local companies could not maintain their work forces at that rate, and many union bakers lost their jobs. The demand for bread mounted and one wholesaler sold 14,000 loaves in one day, three times his normal amount. An industrial arbitrator finally secured an agreement among the competing firms, stabilizing the price at 3¢ a loaf wholesale, and 4¢ retail; the two Bakers Union locals, one for English-speaking members and one for those speaking German, secured a new contract guaranteeing master bakers \$13 to \$15 a week, depending on the number of workmen under their direction, with a \$10 minimum for all bakers.<sup>26</sup>

Again no firm would employ the presidents of the two locals, and again the members taxed themselves to hire them as agents. So many Rochester unions acquired full-time business agents during the nineties that a group of professional unionists developed sufficient strength to maintain programs for the Central

Labor Union of the Knights and the Central Trades Council of the A.F. of L. Both bodies staged picnics and parades on Labor Day, which now became a general holiday. In 1899 when the two groups joined to conduct one parade, over 5000 men marched carrying the banners of 60 locals. Among them were three laborers locals, one for Italians, one for Poles, and one for all the rest, all proud of the \$1.40 a day they had recently won.<sup>27</sup>

### **Civic and Social Life**

Hard as conditions were in Rochester for many poor families, even the depression did not halt the influx of newcomers. Conditions elsewhere were often just as bad and sometimes much worse, as they were for example in poverty-stricken Sicily, from which several hundred migrants arrived to develop the Mount Allegro neighborhood in Rochester. In Poland, too, foreign overlords, greedy landowners, and bitter pogroms spurred many thousands, both Christians and Jews, to migrate to America.<sup>28</sup> To these and to many restless youths from area farms and villages, Rochester, despite its temporary hardships, seemed a city of promise. It offered not only novelty and excitement, and the hope of a better job, but also a chance to participate in civic and social activities that seemed more glamorous than those of the hamlets from which most newcomers, whether native or foreign, hailed.

America has been called a nation of joiners. Certainly one of the first things most newcomers to Rochester did in the 1890's, after finding a home and a job, was to meet his neighbors and try to make new friends. They were eager to join something in order to feel that they really belonged. Many joined a church, some of them for the first time. Most Rochester churches had numerous societies and functions that welcomed newcomers; four Protestant churches, for example, had Men's Bible classes that attracted several hundred attendants each week and vied

for new members. Whether he hailed from a distant or a nearby hamlet, the newcomer was generally glad to meet others who had shared his background. He joined ethnic societies and regional associations and shared with delight in their picnics and ceremonies.<sup>29</sup>

Even the city grammar schools offered courses and developed after-school activities unmatched by the village schools. Col. Samuel P. Moulthrop, for example, made No. 26 School, renamed the Washington Grammar School in 1890, a vital social center for the German and other immigrant families that crowded its neighborhood. Its kindergarten, manual-training, and evening-school programs were so popular that other schools hastened to offer similar opportunities. The school's annual picnic, to which former graduates and parents were invited, became a community event, and so did Arbor Day activities during which Col. Moulthrop led his senior boys on a hike to Seneca Park where each year they planted an oak tree, forming in time a grove that still adds beauty to the park.<sup>30</sup> The stimulating character of this and other grammar schools held an increasing number of pupils through to graduation and so crowded the classes in the old Rochester Free Academy on Fitzhugh Street that the city was forced to build two new high schools, one on the east side and one on the west side, in the early 1900's.<sup>31</sup>

Many other Rochester organizations offered attractive opportunities to newcomers. Some ethnic societies, formed for benevolent purposes, soon developed social functions; many more started as singing groups, athletic clubs, or marching bands, and some adopted secret rituals. Rochester had a plentiful supply of fraternal bodies that brought a touch of ceremony and a sense of distinction to many individuals. The Masons, with 28 lodges, were perhaps the most numerous, but a simple listing of separate branches of the knights of the Macabees, the Red Men, Odd

Fellows, and other orders, including some for the ladies of accredited knights, filled nine pages in the 1900 Directory.

Some of those had philanthropic aspects, but another group of organizations shouldered the main burden in the welfare field. These included varied charitable societies for the support of four orphan asylums, five hospitals, and numerous homes for the indigent and the handicapped. One hospital society enrolled several hundred ladies in groups, called Twigs, each with a special project designed to support the institution and to contribute to their own enjoyment. Some more articulate residents joined the classes and discussions of the Rochester Academy of Science; others attended the public lecture series offered by the University. The Directory list of societies, clubs, and associations filled 24 pages in 1900 and included over 500 organizations.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to these social and cultural organizations, numerous economic and civic bodies afforded opportunities for meaningful participation in community life. Workingmen in most of the building trades and in several industries maintained over sixty labor unions during the nineties, and while their purpose was principally economic, they also provided an absorbing social life to their more dedicated members. Another group of building and loan associations, almost four score in number, attracted the interest of many residents. So of course did the 300 or more incorporated firms which in large part directed the city's business affairs. Political organizations, though less numerous, were sometimes more vocal, especially the ward clubs of the Good Government forces which pressed their campaign for reform against both the Republican and the Democratic clubs during the middle and late nineties.<sup>83</sup>

Although the women of Rochester had no part in these political organizations and little more in those of an economic character, they were increasing their influence in the churches and in cultural and welfare bodies as well. Indeed, Susan B.

Anthony, the untiring leader of women's rights in Rochester and throughout the country, launched a new drive in the late nineties to open the University of Rochester to women. Despite her advancing years, she drove about the city in a carriage soliciting her friends and numerous business leaders and accumulated sufficient pledges to secure her objective. Few men were willing to listen to the arguments of the Women's Political Equality Club, but they could not deny the force of Miss Anthony's unrelenting campaigns. Nor could they disregard the recommendations of her associates in the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, which throughout the nineties was perhaps the most influential action group in the city. Among the many innovations they made was the opening of a headquarters downtown to provide a retreat for working women seeking a place to lunch or rest in what until then had largely been a man's world.<sup>84</sup>

One of the exciting things about Rochester in the late 1890's was the rapidity with which changes were occurring. Not only were the women gaining increased influence, even without the vote, but newcomers from abroad were achieving positions of importance in politics as well as in industry and labor. Two of the five mayors elected in the 1890's were Irish-born, and several of the ward councilmen and supervisors were also naturalized citizens from Germany and Britain as well as Ireland. Ethnic groups not yet represented on these official bodies were securing appointments to other offices, and both the Poles and the Italians placed representatives on the police force by the turn of the century.<sup>85</sup> The Negroes though few in number had the honor of participating in one of Rochester's most memorable ceremonies when Governor Roosevelt came to Rochester on June 9, 1899, to unveil and dedicate the monument to Frederick Douglass. Standing by the Governor was John W. Thompson, headwaiter at the Powers Hotel and founder of the Douglass League, who

had spearheaded the campaign for an appropriate monument to Rochester's great Negro statesman of the Civil War period. The ceremony attracted a throng of 35,000 people onto downtown St. Paul Street, giving it at least for the day precedence over Main Street.<sup>86</sup>

If in addition to new faces one wished to see and help build new machines, Rochester was a good place to locate. Few had taken the experiments of Henry Selden on a horseless carriage seriously in the late seventies, but by the late nineties he was receiving handsome royalties on his patent and when in 1898 J. B. West built a steamer and drove it about town, many horsemen protested. Many curious citizens crowded in to see the moving pictures in the new Wonderland without suspecting their full import for Rochester. Even the newspapers, which occasionally announced the grant of a new patent to a Rochester inventor—a voting machine, a check protector, a gear for a chainless bicycle, an automatic telephone exchange—seldom speculated on the possible effect of the new devices, but the excitement of those closely associated with each development added to the glamor of life in Rochester and increased its lure for other newcomers.<sup>87</sup>

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>*Rochester Evening Times*, October 10, 1893, 3:2.
- <sup>2</sup>Blake McKelvey, *Rochester: The Quest for Quality: 1890-1925* (Cambridge, 1956), III; 170, 224-225, and passim.
- <sup>3</sup>*Post Express*, January 19, 1898, 6:3; *Herald*, April 18, 1898, 5:3.
- <sup>4</sup>Charles M. Robinson, *Rochester Ways*, (Rochester, 1900), p. 11.
- <sup>5</sup>*Democrat and Chronicle*, September 27, 1892, 8:5; *Union and Advertiser*, September 25, 1893, 6:1.
- <sup>6</sup>Patricia E. Fisler, "The Depression of 1893 in Rochester," *Rochester History*, June 1952.
- <sup>7</sup>*U. S. Census* (1890) I: 670-673; (1900) I: 632, 710-711.
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* (1900) I:632.
- <sup>9</sup>*U. S. Census* (1900) III: 474-492.
- <sup>10</sup>James W. Silver, "Diary of a One-Horse Enterprise," *New York Hist.*, April 1952; James W. Silver, Ed., "Making a Living in Rochester: The Diary of Henry D. Silver, 1906-1914," *Rochester History*, October 1953.
- <sup>11</sup>Frank W. Lovejoy: *The Story of a Practical Idealist* (Rochester, 1947) pp. 9-17; "Who's Who in Rochester," *Rochester in History* (Rochester, 1922), pp.99-139.
- <sup>12</sup>Claude Bragdon, *Merely Players* (New York, 1929), pp. 71-78.
- <sup>13</sup>*U. S. Census* (1900) II: CLXXIV-CLXXVI, CCIV-CCV; *U. S. Census* (1910) II: 1313-1314.
- <sup>14</sup>George M. Haushalter, "Sherlock Andrews," Typed mss.
- <sup>15</sup>Blake McKelvey, "The Germans of Rochester," *Rochester History*, January 1958, pp. 18-19; McKelvey, *Rochester* III: 126-127, 153-156; II: 372-390.
- <sup>16</sup>*U. S. Census* (1890) I: No. I: 670-673; No. II: 128.
- <sup>17</sup>Blake McKelvey, *Rochester, The Flower City: 1855-1890* (Cambridge, 1949), II: 210-213, 381-383.
- <sup>18</sup>*U. S. Census* (1890) I: 672-673; (1900) I: 800-801.
- <sup>19</sup>*Post Express*, June 5, 1905, p. 8:6; *U. S. Census* (1900) I: 969 I pt II: 55-59.
- <sup>20</sup>*Herald*, June 27, 1894, 6:5; *Post Express*, August 10, 1898, I:2; Rochester Chamber of Commerce, *Illustrated Rochester: 1898-1899* Rochester (1899), p. 31.
- <sup>21</sup>*Democrat and Chronicle*, September 1, 1894; 9:3; September 5, 1894, 11:1.
- <sup>22</sup>*Democrat and Chronicle*, March 19, 1885, 9:3; March 23, 1895, 10:7; June 5, 1895, 7:4; October 31, 1895, 10:7.
- <sup>23</sup>*Democrat and Chronicle*, June 21, 1895, 8:7; June 27, 1895, 9:1; July 3, 1895, 10:4; July 10, 1895, 7:4; July 17, 1895, 7:3.
- <sup>24</sup>Blake McKelvey, "The Men's Clothing Industry in Rochester's History," *Rochester History*, July 1960, pp. 7-12.
- <sup>25</sup>*Democrat and Chronicle* April 26, 1895, 5:3; April 27, 1895, 15:3; April 30, 1895, 10:6; May 3, 1895, 9:1; May 12, 1895, 12:6; May 19, 1895, 2:5; May 24, 1895, 7:1.
- <sup>26</sup>Blake McKelvey, "Organized Labor in Rochester before 1914," *Rochester History*, January 1963, pp. 13-24; *Illustrated History of Rochester Trades Assembly* (Rochester, 1897); *Union and Advertiser*, June 24, 1899, 9:1; *Herald*, September 5, 1899, 8:1.
- <sup>27</sup>Jerre Mangione, *Mount Allegro* (Boston, 1942); Blake McKelvey, "The Italians of Rochester," *Rochester History*, October 1960, pp. 5-12; McKelvey, *Rochester* III: 149-150.
- <sup>28</sup>McKelvey, *Rochester* III: 114-130.

- <sup>80</sup>Blake McKelvey, "Samuel P. Moulthrop," *Rochester History*, April 1957, pp. 5-10.
- <sup>81</sup>M. Lucile Bowen, "The Rochester Free Academy," *R.H.S. Publications XVII*: 98-100.
- <sup>82</sup>*Rochester Directory* (1900), pp. 979-1003; McKelvey, *Rochester III*: 9-23.
- <sup>83</sup>*Rochester Directory* (1900), pp. 939-950, 1000-1024; McKelvey, *Rochester III*: 46-53, 64-66, 70-71, 73-88.
- <sup>84</sup>Blake McKelvey, "Women's Rights in Rochester," *Rochester History*, July 1948, pp. 14-24.
- <sup>85</sup>Blake McKelvey, "Rochester's Ethnic Transformations," *Rochester History*, July 1963, pp. 10-19.
- <sup>86</sup>Blake McKelvey, "Lights and Shadows in Local Negro History," *Rochester History*, October 1959, pp. 14-16.
- <sup>87</sup>McKelvey, *Rochester III*: 69-70, 183-185, 222-223, 250-252, 264-267.